

WHMIS – An Introduction

COURSE SUMMARY

WHAT IS WHMIS?









WHMIS stands for the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. It was created to provide standard information about hazard identification, safe handling, correct storage and disposal of hazardous materials in order to prevent injuries, illness and death that can be caused by exposure to hazardous materials known as **Controlled Products**.

WHMIS helps build awareness of potential hazards by providing information to employees through:

1. **labels** on the containers of hazardous materials
2. **material safety data sheets** (MSDSs)
3. **worker education and training programs**

WHMIS CLASSES OF CONTROLLED PRODUCTS

Under WHMIS Controlled Products are classified in one or more of the following:

CLASS	HAZARD SYMBOL
Class A: Compressed Gas	
Class B: Flammable and Combustible Material	
Class C: Oxidizing Material	
Class D: Poisonous and Infectious Material: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• D1 – Immediate and Serious Toxic Effects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• D2 – Materials Causing Other Toxic Effects	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• D3 – Biohazardous Infectious Materials	
Class E: Corrosive Material	
Class F: Dangerously Reactive Material	

WORKPLACE LABELS:

There are two types of labels prescribed under WHMIS legislation:

1) **Supplier Label** – required on all Controlled Products distributed to workplaces in Canada. Supplier labels are required to include the following information:

1. **Product Identifier** – e.g., common name, trade name - the same as on the MSDS.
2. **Supplier Identifier** - name and address of supplier.
3. **Reference to the MSDS.**
4. **Hazard Symbols.**
5. **Risk Phrases** - Short phrases describing the hazards.
6. **Precautionary Statement** - Precautions for handling the Controlled Product.
7. **First Aid Measures.**

A supplier label must:

- Be affixed to a Controlled Product by the supplier.
- Be prepared in both English and French
- Contain the information within a crosshatched WHMIS border.

2) **Workplace Label** – produced and used in the workplace for products transferred into other containers or to replace a supplier label if it is damaged or missing. The Workplace Label must contain the following information:

1. **Product Identifier or Product Name**
2. **Information for safe handling** – precautions to minimize the risks injury, e.g., gloves, goggles or face shields.
3. **Reference to the MSDS**

While there are no WHMIS requirements for the design of a workplace label, it must be:

- easily identified and readable
- placed where it can be seen by the workers
- in the language of choice at the workplace.

MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEETS (MSDS):

An MSDS is a technical document that summarizes health and safety information about a controlled product and provides much more detailed information than a Supplier or Workplace label

MSDSs include 9 categories of information:

1. **Product information** - identifies the product, the supplier/manufacturer and the intended use of the product.
2. **Hazardous ingredients** - provides information on the name, concentration and toxicity of each hazardous ingredient in the Controlled Product.
3. **Physical data** - describes the physical nature of product: colour, odour; whether it is a solid, liquid or gas.
4. **Fire or explosion hazard** - information on the flammability of the product and extinguishing methods.
5. **Reactivity data** - information on its chemical stability and how it reacts with other chemicals.
6. **Toxicological properties** - health effects from the product.
7. **Preventive measures** - protective measures and equipment.
8. **First aid measures** - what to do if a person is overexposed to a product through inhalation, ingestion or absorption.
9. **Preparation information** - name and phone number of the person/company that prepared the MSDS and the date of preparation.

Accuracy and Timeliness of MSDSs:

- Information on MSDSs and labels must be accurate at the time of sale of the Controlled Product.
- Suppliers are required to provide MSDSs that have a preparation date of **not more than three years** (3 X 365 days) prior to the sale or importation of a Controlled Product.
- An MSDS must be reviewed and revised every 3 years.
- If there is new information, it must be disclosed on a new MSDS and, if applicable, the label of the product.

Availability and Access to MSDSs:

Employers are required to have an up-to-date MSDS for all Controlled Products in their workplace that:

- includes accurate information
- is less than 3 years old
- is readily available at the workplace and accessible to all workers.

Employers may make MSDSs available on computer terminals as long as:

- workers are trained on how to access the data
- a copy of the MSDS is provided to the employee or safety and health committee/representative upon request.

PLEASE NOTE: *If your organization has WellNet's Link2MSDS online MSDS management service, you have access to up-to-date MSDSs through any Internet-enabled computer. Ask your OH&S supervisor if Link2MSDS is available in your workplace.*

EDUCATION:

For more information on WHMIS education please contact your health and safety office.